4: Villa Rojas E-4, 5 (1938-1944) 1969
NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Their slender-
147 ness is deceptive, for their great strength lies
[482] in their legs, back, and neck, seen in their
ability to carry loads of 45 kilograms (100 lbs.)
and upwards, all day up and down hill without
142 undue fatigue . . . Hair form is straight,
coarse, and black. Gray hair or baldness are
very unusual. Body hair, as far as could be
observed, is negative.

143 As many as 99.56 per cent of Tzeltal be-
long to blood type O, which is one of the
highest frequencies registered in the Ma-
143 yance area. According to Matson and Swan-
144 son (1959, p. 50), "In general the more
isolated peoples such as the Lacandon, Tzel-
tal, Tzotzil and Cakchiquel show the high-
est frequency of the O gene." This condition
is attributed to the absence of racial mix-
ture.

Cultural Configuration

621 Like the Indians in the highlands of Gua-
[171] temala (Tax, 1937), the Tzeltal group them-
selves in communities which are distinct
social and cultural units, as is characteristic
621 of the tribe. Each community has its well-
184 defined lands, its own dialect forms, wear-
ing apparel, kinship system, politico-reli-
gious organization, economic resources,
crafts, and other cultural features. Any na-
tive of the region finds it easy to identify
the origin of other Indians by noting their
speech, wearing apparel, or the goods they
621 sell. Solidarity between the members of
each community is strong and becomes
manifest in times of conflict with outside
groups or in their way of gathering accord-
ing to their "nationality" on fiestas or mar-
ket days when people of other communities
attend. On the other hand, no ethnic solidar-
[628] ity whatsoever exists. Each community re-
stricts itself to its own affairs and nothing
else; whatever happens to the other Tzeltal
communities is something altogether apart.

621 The territorial limits of these communi-
632 ties do not always coincide with those of
[171] the municipalities, as in Guatemala. Var-
ious well-defined communities exist (in the
terms described above) which belong to

[P 197-A]

291 184 a typical outfit with special characteristics. For instance, the men of Tenejapa wear a hat of broad brim and pointed round crown, trimmed with thin ribbons of different colors. They also wear a dark chamarra or poncho with thin white stripes. The characteristic clothes of Cancuc are short, tight pants and a long shirt trimmed with red wool yarn. In Tierra Caliente the wool chamarra is not used nor is the variation in outfit so well defined.

Transportation

482 [484] [487] [492] Men and pack animals are the principal carriers in the Tzeltal region, which is crossed in all directions by narrow trails. Men carrying loads of 40–50 kg. usually 482 147 walk, in one day, as far as 8 leguas (leagues). According to Blom and LaFarge (1926–27, 2:386), the Tzeltal of the highlands are so strong "que ponen en vergüenza a una mula." In 1944 I observed Indians [565] passing by my Yochib camp, carrying chairs on their shoulders, in which a lady or a child of upper-class Ladinos from Ocosingo 492 and Yajalon would be sitting. Pack animals are now becoming common among the Tzeltal, some of whom also have saddle horses.

491 Part of the Tzeltal-Tzotzil region is crossed by the Pan-American Highway joining Guatemala and Mexico City. In recent years roads called "brechas de penetración" for motor vehicles are being constructed. 474 493 The natives of some communities (Oxchuc and Chanal) have organized cooperatives and purchased their own trucks.

804 *Units of Measure*

The system of measures still retains aboriginal characteristics. The main units are:

Nab: Distance between the end of the thumb and the middle finger extended.

Chuyub: Distance between the end of the thumb and the index finger extended. It is equivalent to the jeme. The Indians do not use the cuarta (distance between the thumb and little finger extended).

[P 208-B]

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

285 being an average of only three strands to a centimeter, with the splints about three centimeters apart. Ordinarily the widest part of the basket is at the rim, but a very small basket, *tutemOtc*, was observed, in which the greater diameter was about half-way up the side. The weave was the same. The standard large size is 23 centimeters high, 36 centimeters diameter at the rim, and 13 at the base (fig. 304).

286 [482] The men also make the nets, *tcotcaH*, which are used, suspended from one shoulder, as a pocket, or, slung from a tump-line, to carry small burdens. They are made of hennequen or ixtla cord. The mouth is an extra heavy string, from which the woven part of the net hangs (fig. 305). The method of laying the cord was observed

[285]

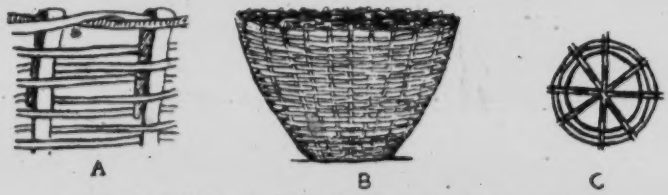

Fig. 304—Basketry. A. Detail of weave showing finish of rim. B. Basket, height 23 c.m. C. Arrangement of splints at the bottom.

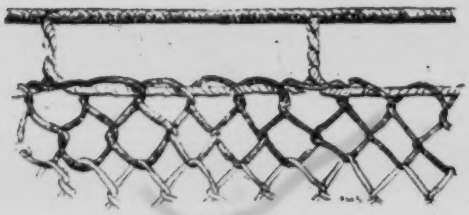

Fig. 305—Detail of Net.

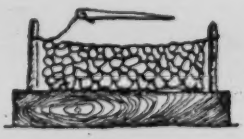

Fig. 306—Frame for weaving net.

at Cancuc. The istla threads are held in the crotch of the left knee, and the cord is wound on the thigh with a flat-hand rubbing motion. A bundle of threads laid parallel to each other, is taken by the middle and rolled into the already made cord, forming two strands. When the strands are ready, they are laid together with a reverse-stroke of the hand on the thigh. The net is woven with a deer-horn needle, *muk'*, on a frame, *tiaH*, consisting of a board about 18 centimeters long with an upright stick at each end (fig. 306). The actual weaving was not observed.

322 412 Considering that their only tools are their machetes, and an occasional cheap pocket knife, the wood-working done by the men is

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

tied by a string carried down to an arched stick, H, stuck in the ground. This string, by holding down the far ends, counterbalances the weight of the fall at the other ends. At the end of the string the cross-stick, D, holds it against the arch; it, in turn, is held by the trigger, C, one end of which braces against it, the other end against the far side of the trap, passing under the deadfall. A circular fence of sticks prevents an animal from getting at the outer part of the trap. A straight fence on the other side of the fall necessitates its entering through the entrance, AA, to get at the bait, B, on the trigger. The animal dislodges the trigger, releasing D and with it the string. The outer ends of the sticks fly up, and the weighted log falls. In the rat trap, the log and stones came to at least three kilograms, arranged to fall through a space of about ten centimeters, other traps being in proportion. 224

When hunting with a gun, a red fruit called *ahoon* is frequently rubbed on the shot, and *palma bendita, tcul-těc-wil can,* the palm used in church decorations, is used for the wad. This prevents the bullet "from getting tired" before it reaches its mark. [824]

Meat obtained while hunting, if it cannot be carried immediately to the house, is dried on a rack, *tcax*. 251

The primary method of carrying goods of all kinds is by the tump-line, for which, as has been said in the discussion of physical and other characteristics, these people are very well adapted. The tump-line, *pak,* is a broad strip of inner bark, or of cow-hide. For their ordinary uses, this is a single strip, the ends being attached to a net (q. v.) of their own manufacture. When a package too bulky for the net is carried, a long strap is used with the ends tied together. This is looped through itself, around the package, so that it hangs in two slings. Additional straps may be attached to the line where it passes over the ears, to wrap around the sides of the burden. A flat piece of cowhide, *tcokHax,* is worn against the back, to protect the carrier from the chafing of his load. Both men and women use the tump-line, the carrying of objects on the head being unusual. 482

Formerly the Indians of this district are said to have owned a good many mules and horses for packing, which they lost during the recent political disturbances. Many of them know something about packing. At present, however, few if any own cattle of any kind. 492 [978]

The highland rivers do not, on the whole, lend themselves to water travel, although the Bachajon territory reaches to the Bascan, Tulija, and other more amenable water-ways. Canoes are known only as introductions of German or Ladino ranchers. The natives use a 487 581 [977]

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Tenango
Cancuc

443 439 themselves maintain an export trade, yet there is some. From the distant, shy Lacandones a little tobacco of fine grade comes out, in exchange for salt, dogs, powder for flint-locks, and aguardiente. Tenango pottery goes down to Salto de Agua and up to Tenejapa where it meets the finer products of Amatenango, with which it cannot compete. Amatenango pottery is traded as far, at least, as San Andres in Guatemala. Chamula blankets are worn in Cancuc, and all through the Chiapas mountains. The Indians of the highest section keep warm in a heavy woolen shirt called *"chuj,"* which is made in Guatemala. So they themselves, on a small scale, and the Ladino peddlers yet more, keep alive a vestige of the old trade that once ran from Central America to Utah.

114 291 • 482

Fig. 321—Cargadores with our boxes.

114 The last day's climb had seriously fatigued our horses. It became obvious that they alone could not bring us safely through, so on the sixth we arranged for five *cargadores,* under one of the village councillors, to carry five of our boxes through to Cancuc (fig. 321). It seemed as though that would make quite a load for each of these men, but we came to realize that the carrying power of a Highland Tzeltal truly puts a mule to shame.

At the end of the valley we swung up into the highroad that runs from San Cristóbal to the Lowlands at Salto de Agua. Once fairly well smoothed and levelled, this road is now impassable for ox-carts, and even horses must pick their way over the jagged limestone

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Tenejapa

estimate, with their own, regular Indian administration under the control of the Ladino government. The *Presidente Municipal*, a most obliging man, got the Indian *Presidente* for us, whom we photographed by the last light of the day (fig. 329). Through this chief, men were sent out to bring in grass; they returned with enormous, green bundles as big as themselves.

The Indian houses outside the town differ from those previously described in the possession of a sort of porch, or part under the roof in front screened with boards, introductory to the house itself.

The Tenejapeños are strongly built, thickset, and short, with enormously powerful calves. In fact the chief industry of the tribe is acting as porters. They go in large bands to places at a considerable distance to take or bring back loads, competing successfully with the Chamula packtrains. In this the women are as proficient as the men. Their colour is dark, a rich brown, more red than golden, with distinctly pink cheeks showing through in the case of the children and old people. The men are almost beardless. Faces are rather broad and round* (fig. 330).

FIG. 329—Tenejapa, Chia. The chief of the Tenejapeños.

The essential parts of a man's costume are a pair of shorts and a brown and white striped Chamula Indian blanket, worn as a poncho. Two of these blankets may be comfortably worn in that climate. Hats, when used, are also of Chamula make, of straw with a flat brim, and round, close-fitting crown pointed at the top. Usually they are decorated with ribbons. A sash of white material may be worn, the ends of which, hanging down in front, are elaborately embroidered (fig. 331). The

*Starr (1902) made some measurements upon these people, the most important of which are summarised here. They show an interesting variability.

STATURE IN MILLIMETERS

Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Range	Below 1600	1600—1650	1650—1700	Above 1700	Total
1,557	1,722	1,402	320	75	15	4	1	100

	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Range
CEPHALIC INDEX	78.9	94.6	66.0	18.5
FACIAL INDEX	81.6	94.5	65.6	29.0
NASAL INDEX	88.9	102.2	64.1	38.1

bly similar in texture, design, and form to the pottery made now. Just as a man defines himself as an agriculturalist, a woman defines herself as a potter. Men complain if their wives do not produce pottery, and I know of two cases of separation on the grounds that the woman was not fulfilling one of her functions as housewife by helping the family budget with pottery production. Most women like to make pottery: it helps them to pass the day, and they say they would be bored without it. Some of the women who have gone with their husbands for extended stays in hot country have tried to make pottery out of clays available there, but because of its inferior quality, they have not had much success. Unlike women of neighboring towns, the women of Tzo'ontahal usually do not accompany their husbands to the fincas "because they have their work at home."

Making pottery. The women make a wide variety of household and ceremonial objects, but the item which has the widest market distribution is the water storage jar (See Plate 7). They introduce new items in response to local needs, such as the funnel used in channeling liquor into large containers from the retort of the still. One vessel which is disappearing from production is the large ceremonial cooking pot. The only woman who knew how to do this (or who admitted to knowing, since it is unpaid work) died in the 60s, and no one has replaced her. One woman who had a reputation for eccentricity, introduced several elaborate vases and ashtrays. Her creative imagination was best exemplified in a combined ashtray and vase which featured four frogs poised on the lip of the tray, presumably drinking from a fountain. Reina (1962–1963) has pointed out that women of the Guatemalan community of Chinautla who wish to be accepted in the community must limit themselves to conventional forms, and the same restriction seems to apply in Tzo'ontahal.

The women of a household work as a group in collecting clay and in firing pottery. Clay is free since it is found in the communally owned hills on the perimeter of the town. It is collected preferably during the rainy season when it is easier to gather from the open gorges in which it is found, but if the supply runs out, other trips are made. All of the women of the household go, sometimes with neighbors or relatives in groups of five or six. They collect large clay balls weighing from forty to fifty pounds which they carry in a net bag on their backs with a tumpline.

(see plates following p.198..Analyst

[P.198-C]

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Plate 3. A father and his two sons, walking in order of age, leave the village to go to their milpa. The father, walking in front, is wearing the old-style costume with a wrapped overshirt concealing short undertrousers. His sons wear western clothing. All of the men carry net bags on a tumpline, with their backs protected from their burdens by a sheepskin. They all carry machetes, and the boys have rifles.

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417
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Plate 4. Farmer showing the arada plow. He is holding the handle, and the shaft, made of a long tree post, is propped on the ground.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

805 lating the time of day; when I questioned them as to the hour, they were often as much as an hour off, usually behind.

Most activities are ordered with reference to the Gregorian calendar, but the twenty-day Maya calendrical month, defined as "twenty days or a month" is used in much the same way that we use "a fortnight." The In-
805 821 dians consider the moon to be an uncertain indicator of time, since "she does not walk well." But the moon is important in the culture: people note its different phases and are especially aware of the phase under which a child is born—an important sign for the newborn's future. If a baby is
[856] born at the full moon, he is expected to mature more readily. The full
[787] moon also signifies a propitious time for undertaking certain activities, such as cutting wood for the main posts of a house and cutting palm for the roof.

The Daily Schedule

512 462 Daily activities are organized by traditional economic pursuits. The woman is the first one to rise in the morning. She gets up at dawn, lights
[252] the fire, and sets a jar of water to boil for coffee. She grinds the nixtamal cooked the night before on the stone grinding board, or takes it to the mill
[412] in the center. She then makes tortillas either by hand or with a press; a re-
[177] cent innovation made of two hinged pieces of wood in which the ball of
[178] dough is set between pieces of plastic paper.

[264] The men of the household are served first, followed by the boys; the women and girls eat last. As soon as they have eaten, the men and boys who have finished the required three years of schooling go out to the
[481] fields to work. They walk single file even in the streets of the town, the fa-
[482] ther preceding his sons. Each carries a machete, net bag, tumpline, and sheepskin back-protector if he plans to carry any loads. Many bring shot-
[411] guns as well in order to hunt for field rats, raccoon, or the burrowing ani-
[224] mals they find in the fields.

After the men leave, the women go to the porch and "seize their work."
[857] The children go to school, which begins at eight-thirty in the morning
[878] and continues until five o'clock in the evening. They return home for
[264] lunch, a meal of tortillas, coffee, and sometimes beans or chayote when it is in season.